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FATE
Ada Negri

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~~Samuel Magraw~~

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F A T E

F A T E

ADA NEGRI

Authorized Translation from the Italian by

A. M. VON BLOMBERG



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*“ 'Tis pain that teaches thoughts their highest
flight.”*

ADA NEGRI¹



SHE lives at Motta-Visconti. So much we know because all her poems bear this indication in the left-hand lower corner. But who is Ada Negri? Why does she write only for the *Illustrazione Popolare*? Why does she not step out into plain daylight, and why does no one help her to do so?

At times, when striving passionately to be
Loosed from these hateful bonds, I curse and cry;
The vain world laughs, and listens not to me.

Why does no one listen to her?

These were the questions asked only a few months ago by the subscribers to the *Corriere della*

¹ It is the general custom to introduce lecturers and poets at their first public appearance. To introduce Ada Negri, we recur to a most simple means which to us seems also the best, that is, to reproduce the article another distinguished and highly valued authoress dedicated to her in the *Corriere della Sera* last December.

Ada Negri *Sera* and the *Illustrazione Popolare* ; even those who neither understand nor care for poetry felt themselves deeply moved by Ada Negri's verse.

Strange, indeed, that, thus known and admired *privately*, she should not find a way out of the thickets lining her path, to step forth openly upon the highroad.

Still it may have been best for her so : her struggle with obstacles which she did not know as such, her never appeased thirst for glory, surely helped to kindle the flame that now warms all her poetry, giving it the stamp of such true feeling, so new and so entirely her own.

Her readers, little by little, have come to understand that the pain in her verses is real pain, that this young creature must have suffered as much as if she had already lived a long life ; and they will finally come to the conviction that she, conscious as she is of her genius, and made strong by sad experience, might emerge at any moment into the sunshine of that glory she dreams of with such ardour.

The "austere figure" that appears at her bedside one night and that calls itself Misfortune says, after having crushed her with the prophecy of what she is destined to suffer :

He who creates in suffering's night
Alone sees glory's day.
'T is pain that teaches thoughts their highest flight.
And she who had repelled her answers : " Stay."

Misfortune ! how well we feel that it was the *Ada Negri*
companion of Ada Negri's youth ! maybe that
from her childhood she knew

— the sleepless nights of useless prayer,
Full of the morrow's dread,

maybe she also knew " those long days without
bread " —

Amid the dark, here in my heart did reign
A mad, unbridled craving for the sun.

At the age of eighteen she bids her mother
farewell, leaving Lodi to take a position as a
teacher at Motta-Visconti, a squalid, dismal vil-
lage, not reached even yet by the wheels of a
tram ; there it lies, as if forgotten, on the ridge
above the Ticino where the great woods extend,
well known to the huntsmen of Milan ; here it
is that Ada Negri goes to listen to the voices of
the rising wind, which,

Proudly its pinions shaking, twists and turns
And rages furiously.

Ada Negri, when your verses shall appear col-
lected in a volume, much will be said and in-
vented concerning your person and your life !
Let me tell first a little of the melancholy truth.
This melancholy truth is an honour to you ; and
some day you will think of your poverty with
tenderness and gratitude, for it is largely to
poverty that you owe what you are.

Ada Negri Let us then cross the wide, muddy courtyard on which the stables open and where the geese are splashing, to go and knock at your crazy door, climbing the two steep flights of worn brick steps. We come to greet you in your dim room, where the window-panes are not glass but paper, where the box that contains your books and that serves you as a divan is the most elegant piece of furniture. Our hearts contract the first moment, but then they expand, they swell with emotion and admiration.

It was in a literary magazine, if I am not mistaken, that the *Working Mother* was published, the description of that great mill where, without respite, a poor, weary woman is working, whose careworn brow seems illumined by a noble pride, for she is working for her son who is to study :

— Her joy, °
Her one ambition, her one son, behind
Whose brow she has divined
The lofty flight of genius.

Who has not thought, on reading this passage, that perhaps it should be *a daughter* ?

The poor woman, weary and ill, who has worked all her life, has now taken refuge with her daughter, and awaits, timorous and thoughtful, the bright future when the dark head will be crowned “with gold and laurel wreaths.”

Is it coming, that great day ? Already letters, magazines, and books arrive from all parts of Italy,

and her daughter's name is everywhere ; the streets which she walks ring with it, and she is thrilled with pride and reverence. *Ada Negri*

Yes, your daughter's name is known, but no one knows who she is, and she knows no one, and will, for some time yet, have to go in her wooden shoes to the school where seventy to eighty dirty urchins shout to bid her good-morning and try her patience, reciting the alphabet in unison.

Her mother sees her coming home with pale face, burning hands, and flashing eyes, and trembles with fear lest she be ill. It is the intense effort of living two lives, of listening to two voices. While she hears those from without, and speaks and answers and with rigid firmness fulfils her duty, a thousand other voices speak within her, a strange music rising from her soul, wishing to break out ; but it must not before the dead of night, when all is silent around her and the duty of the day is done.

It is then that a vast radiant horizon opens before her. He who reads her poetry might think that she has seen and known everything ; but she knows only solitude and misfortune, a dark, cold world where the light from without appears dazzling, and the world of the fortunate more sweet and warm than it really is.

Ada Negri has read very few modern books, but she knows them all from the various contradictory criticisms of the literary reviews ; and it is strange

Ada Negri how she seizes the truth out of the good and the bad, said of them. She has never seen a theatre, but is enthusiastic about Duse, and has been possessed lately by such a craving to see and hear her that she can think of nothing else: it is always her papers and periodicals that bring her information, a whole bundle of them, almost all there are in Italy, which she has been receiving every week for the last two years, bearing the Milan post-mark, from an admirer that has never let her know his identity.

Ada Negri has never seen the sea, either, nor does she know the mountains, or even the hills and a lake: a few months ago one could say not even a large city, as she did nothing but pass through Milan from Porta Ticinese to Porta Romana to go to Lodi to spend her vacation with her mother.

This summer some friends detained her for two days, and it was indeed a new life that opened wide before her eyes in the great populous city, at the season when the races and the exhibitions made it so brilliant. Crowds, bent on pleasure, passed by her with the splendour of luxury, beauty, and elegance. Art, of which she caught a glimpse at Brera, filled her with wonder, moved her deeply, inspired her; the magic charm of distant lands and nations held her spellbound before those Egyptians and their horses, those brown almées with their painted eyes.

Two dream-days: the whole little slender

figure vibrated, the big black eyes burned as in a fever; her friends asked themselves if they had not done wrong in showing her that which she could not enjoy for a longer time. *Ada Negri*

She returned to put on her wooden shoes again; she returned to teach spelling to her eighty noisy, hard-headed children, but she no longer knew how to be quiet and resigned to her obscure lot.

There will be many who, on reading her book, will say that there is in it a note of insistence, too often struck: it is true, she herself feels it and acknowledges it: but it is so, it is her present self; it is the mournful, incessant bell, calling for help; it is her youth, rebelling against pain, which has been her constant companion; it is the outcry of genius, struggling not to be buried alive.

I am a poet, a poet, and the light of glory smiles not on me.

Still, how sad and sweet is her song at times, how her youth, weary of longing for the future, turns to the past, and she becomes a child again and rests beside her mother's knee.

Mother, here — in the silence — near thee kneeling :

And she questions :

Why should we suffer and yet be forgiving ?
And why should love with dazzling magic stream
Through our hearts, a wingèd hymn and living,
Then all be shattered even as a dream ?
Why should we suffer and yet be forgiving ?

Ada Negri The sweet note of Ada Negri's lyric poetry always flows either from memories of her childhood, rocked by her mother's love, or from maternal love, appearing to her as a far-away Fata Morgana of peace. Desolation, therefore, never possesses Ada Negri long; she rebounds like a steel spring; the bitterness of discomfort is silenced in a flash of defiance, in an outburst of daring hope. It seems as if her little figure grew taller, when, defying misery, the "drear, toothless ghost," she exclaims:

— Mine are youth and life !
Thou shalt not see me, no,
Not see me fainting in this fatal strife :
O'er fallen ruins, over grief and tears,
Triumph my twenty years !

And how deeply are we moved when she says,
poor creature :

Down in the world there, see !
What roses and what sunlight far and nigh !
List to the jubilee,
The trills of larks up in the radiant sky:
The air with faith and with ideals rings
And fluttering of wings.

But we are filled with admiration when this courageous girl, proud in her virtue and her genius, adds :

For labour's dignity
That nobly governs all, I long,
and, haughtily dismissing the "black enchantress,"
says :

And I from out thy meshes boldly spring
Life's hymn of praise to sing !

Ada Negri

If there is any poetry felt by every one, it is that of Ada Negri, so essentially modern and democratic. There is in it that "stormy present" invoked by Arturo Graf, here truly swelled to a tide, "the immense flood of voices that overwhelm us with wonder and pity, that kindle us with enthusiasm, that fill us with a mortal sadness."

SOFIA BISI ALBINI.

FATE

A FIGURE, awful to behold, austere,
Stood by my bed last night.
The dagger at her side filled me with fear,
Her eyes flashed down at me with scornful light.
“I am Misfortune. Hear,

Thou shrinking child, where'er thou mayest be
I'll never leave thee — nay,
Through thorns and flowers, to death I'll follow
thee,
Even in the void beyond near thee to stay.”
I sobbed: “Away, away!”

She firmly stayed, and from me would not go.
She spoke: “'Tis thus decreed.
Pale flower of the cypress, of the snow,
Of crime and of the tomb, poor human weed,
Above 't is thus decreed.”

I rose and cried: “But it is hope I crave,”
To make my young days bright,
In thrills of love exultingly to rave,
I want the kiss of genius and of light! —
Oh go, oh go away!”

Fate

She spoke : “ He who creates in suffering’s night
Alone sees glory’s day.

’T is pain that teaches thoughts their highest
flight, —

For him who bravely fights is victory.”

I slowly answered : “ Stay ! ”

NAMELESS

I HAVE no name. — My home a hovel damp,
I grew up from the mire,
Wretched and outcast folk my family,
And yet within me burns a flame of fire.

A praying angel and an evil dwarf
Are ever at my side.
My thought is galloping o’er hill and plain
As did Mazeppa on his deathly ride.

A strange enigma I of hate and love,
Of strength and gentleness;
The black abyss attracts me with its gloom,
And I am softened by a child’s caress.

When, knocking at the door of my low room,
Misfortune comes, I laugh.
I laugh when I ’m forsaken or assailed,
When I am joyless, comfortless, I laugh.

But over trembling worn old age, o'er those
That have no bread, I weep.

Nameless

I weep o'er tender children thin and wan,
And o'er a thousand unknown woes I weep.

And when the tears, that fill my heart, in strange,
In daring song o'erflow,
That thrills my breast and quivers on my lips,
My soul's whole fervour into it I throw.

I care not who may hear. When dastard hate
Would strike me or defame,
Defying fate, I pass and do not look :
The poisonous arrow thus must miss its aim.

DISTURB ME NOT

WHEN to thy words of love I do not listen
And when my eyes shine bright,
And when with sudden and unwonted pallor
My lips and cheeks grow white,

When, lost in thought and of all else forgetful,
My dusky head I raise,
Disturb me not — a world divine lies open —
Immense — before my gaze.

I see the sun from out the clouds descending,
Nude youth with radiant face,
Enfold the maiden earth, adorned with myrtle,
In powerful embrace ;

*Disturb
Me Not*

And from the hay, just cut, and from the
cornfields

That wave like golden seas,
From the oases in the distant desert,
From oak and cypress-trees,

From the great woods, howling amid the tempest,
With wildly passionate cry,
At the voluptuous thrill of love, reviving
Creation far and nigh,

I hear, I hear, as birds spread wide their pinions
And rise in straggling flight,
Tremendous gusts of wind soar up triumphant
With strength and health's delight.

All is abloom with radiant hopes and roses,
With pure, confiding hearts,
Victorious efforts, noble exultations,
Daring inventions, arts :

No longer blood, no longer blood is flooding
The earth in gory run,
No longer war, the sorcerer inhuman,
Is levelling his gun ;

No longer now the cannon madly filleth
The air with thunderous roar,
And battle-songs amid the raging slaughter
Fly back and forth no more ;

All men are one : with ecstasy most sacred
Inspired as ne'er before.

*Disturb
Me Not*

A sweet and solemn chant of peace is wafted
Across from shore to shore.

Steam snorts and shrieks, machines are fiercely
groaning,

Red burns the furnace-glow,
Cleaving the fertile glebe, the steady ploughshare
Is toiling to and fro.

And o'er the earth that, like a lion roaring,
With industry doth teem,
Proud in the wind her pinions white unfolding,
Rules Liberty supreme.

THE WAVES FLOW ON

BETWEEN the rugged banks with steady force
The waves flow weeping on. The leaden sky
Is listening. Not a smile there is on high,
No breath stirs in the night. Along their course

The waves flow weeping on. Upon their breast
In sadness grave they carry down the vale
The lifeless body of a lovely, pale,
Unhappy girl who in their depth sought rest.

The waves flow weeping on — in this lament
The echo rings of a strange mystery,
The human cry, the sobs of misery
Of a wild desperate love — defeated — spent.

THE STREET URCHIN

WHEN in the muddy street, I see him running,

His little shoes all worn,
His trousers ragged and his jacket torn,
His handsome face most mischievous and cunning ;

And when I see him 'mid the surging eddy
Of carts, he steals or begs,
Now deftly throwing stones at poor curs' legs,
Bold and corrupt, a youthful thief already ;

And when I see him laugh, I can't help thinking :
“ His mother is all day
There in the mill ; in prison his father — nay,
Poor flower he of thorns ! ” — My heart is sinking

Within me, with anxiety I wonder :
“ What will become of thee,
Without a guide on this tempestuous sea
Of life, forlorn and ignorant ? I wonder

What thou wilt be and what will be thy station
Some twenty years from now ;
An honest workman with a sunburnt brow ?
A useful member of our struggling nation ?

The labourer's honest shirt shalt thou be wearing
Or convict's garb ! Or shall
I see thee wretched at the hospital,
At work, in prison, a vagabond wayfaring ? ”

And lo ! Across the street I would run over
And in supreme distress,
In agony, in pity I would press
Him to my heart ; with kisses I would cover

*The
Street
Urchin*

His mouth, his forehead ; close beside him
kneeling,

Would whisper in his ears,
Choked by compassion's quickly rising tears,
These sacred words, full of a sister's feeling :

“ I too was born 'mong thorns, the sky above me,
My mother too for me
Was working hard there in the factory,
I know what want and suffering mean — I love
thee.”

JEALOUS OF THEE

ONE day I saw thee pass.— In my disdainful
And lonely soul at once — I know not why—
Suspicion thrilled through me :
But now I know thee, hate thee, jealous ay !
Jealous I am of thee !

Go, siren, go and triumph. God hath given
To thee thy wayward and thy supple grace,
A dazzling treasure rare :
Fatal as lust, enticing is thy face,
White maiden with thy braids of golden hair !

Jealous of Why hast thou come? When of thy youth's
Thee fair blossom,
Thy daring fascination I caught sight,
From me my hope all fled ;
My splendid dream, alas ! lies shattered quite,
With broken pinions — dead.

Ah, if thou didst but know what souls can suffer
When they are rent by passion's sharpest thorn,
When love is dead and gone,
How empty seems the world, when all forlorn
The heart is left neglected and alone !

Oh could I but forget the rosy visions
Of my infatuate, my passionate dream
Of happy youth ! The sun
Of joy on me never again shall beam.
Love — life for me are done.

Go, siren, go and triumph. — Thine the laughter,
The false brief feast of sweet voluptuousness ;
If my own time is set,
And I must be abandoned in distress,
The wrath of fate shall overtake thee yet.

When lonely 'mid the ruins of thy passion,
The wild intoxication which is lost
Thou seekest in dismay,
When once thou cravest, shivering with frost,
The glow of love's past day,

Erect and haughty I shall rise before thee,
A ghost of vengeance dread, wrapt in a shroud,
Glad of thy pain, shall dare
At thy lost happiness to laugh aloud,
White maiden with thy braids of golden hair :

*Jealous of
Thee*

Because, proud of thy beauty, thou hast trodden
Into the dust my dream of rosy gold
With shameless foot. Ah me !
I hate thee, jealous am I, siren bold,
Jealous am I of thee !

A SHORT STORY

SHE seemed a poet's dream, divinely fair ;
White always was her raiment, calm and still
As of the Orient sphinx her wondrous face.

Full, long, and lustrous flowed her silken hair ;
Her short clear laugh seemed like a bird's sweet
trill,
Majestic, statuelike her languid grace.

She loved — without return, yet fed the blaze
Of passion's fire which her clear brow belied,
And of this hidden flame she spoke to none.

The unfulfilled desire consumed her days —
In an October twilight hour she died,
As the verbena dies for want of sun.

AUTOPSY

O H, haggard doctor, who with eyes intent,
Shining with fervid zeal,
Dost now my naked corpse dissect, torment
With thine unflinching steel,

Knowest thou who I was ? — While searching
through
My body with thy knife,
In this sepulchral chamber listen to
The story of my life.

Alone upon the streets I lived. I had
No parents and no home ;
Barefoot, without a name, I, hardly clad,
In wind and cold did roam.

I knew the sleepless nights of useless prayer,
Full of the morrow's dread,
I knew the days of secret dire despair,
Those long days without bread.

I knew all vice, I drained tears' bitter cup,
Tasted fear's agony,
'Mong hostile squalid people I grew up
In darkest misery ;

And in a hospital I lay one day
Upon a neat white bed,
When, lo ! a black colossal bird of prey
Its pinions o'er me spread.

And thus I died, like a poor dog astray.

Autopsy

Dost understand? — Alone,
Without a word of hope I passed away
Into the dark unknown !

How full and lustrous flows my raven hair,
Unfastened from its coil,
Without a kiss of love 't will be somewhere
Laid in the cold black soil.

How white and virginlike, how lithe is this
My body, how well made !
It is disgraced now by the lustful kiss
Of thy too eager blade.

With a sinister smile, untiring, tear
My bowels out, and still
Gloat over my sold corpse ; go on to bare
My bones and veins at will.

What does it matter ? Naught but refuse I.
Dig deep, seek zealously
The awful secret thou of hunger, try
To solve its mystery.

Wrench out my heart, its organism sound,
And try thou to explain
The wondrous mystery, sublime, profound,
The mystery of pain.

Autopsy Dost thou not know it? Thus beneath thy gaze,
 Naked, I suffer yet,
 Staring at thee from out my eyes' dull glaze.
 'Thou never shalt forget,

Never forget me, for with my last breath,
 Passion's last effort dread,
Deep from my breast a gurgling gasp of death,
 A malediction fled.

SNOW

ON fields and streets below
In wildly whirling flight
Falls noiselessly and light
 The snow.

The white flakes dance their best
In heaven's hall on high,
Then, tired, down they lie
 To rest.

On roofs and chimneys steep
That wrapped in silence stand,
On graves and garden-land
 They sleep.

And all is peace profound :
Lost in oblivion quite,
The world lies still and white,
 Snowbound.

Infinite calm supreme
Descends from heaven above,
And of a slumbering love
I dream.

Snow

MIST

I SUFFER. — Far away
The mists in dreamy train
Rise from the silent plain
All gray.

The ravens black on high
The air with croakings fill,
Across the moorland still
They fly.

The trees their branches bare
Towards the clouds that drift
Imploringly uplift
In prayer.

I shiver ! — I'm alone ! —
Weighed down by the gray sky,
Floats in the twilight by
A moan,

Repeating to me : Come
And leave this gloomy vale,
Unloved one, sad and pale,
Oh come !

NIGHT

ON the fantastic garden
Whence balms of roses rise
The night's caressing shadow
In silence lies.

And yet a thought, a heart-beat
Is throbbing as it were
And trembling like a shudder
Within the air.

Hark ! does the dusky darkness
With faintly halting breath
Tell to the withered thistles
A tale of death ?

Maybe — for gentle showers
Of shining dewdrops fall
Into the half-closed petals
From heaven's hall.

Yea, over silent suffering
Of now and long ago,
And over untold anguish
And untold woe,

And over love-spells broken,
O'er bygone joys and fears
The mournful night is weeping
Her tender tears.

AS LONG AS I LIVE AND BEYOND

SHE said to me : "Thou never laughest, nay,
Thy biting verse with malediction rings.

Thou knowest not the lay
Where joy plays in the sun, where zephyr's breath
Music of kisses brings.

Thou knowest not that Phœbian song of yore
That like an antique goddess, naked, fair,
Her mantle drops to soar,
Scattering acanthus and wistaria sweet,
Into the balmy air."

"Where wert thou born?" again she spoke to me;
"Whence, singer of misfortune, dost thou come?

What evil fay on thee,
When in thy cradle, wrought her spell?" —
And I :

"A lowly hut my home.

I grew up from the mire. From far and near
Throughout the fervent hymns forever sent
From the whole earth, I hear,
Ringing e'en through the triumph of the sun,
An echo of lament.

There falls upon my heart a crimson rain
Of crying blood, dripping from riddled chests,
The blood of those brave slain
Who gave their lives when shaken liberty
A bulwark asked of breasts.

*As Long
as I Live
and
Beyond*

And from the dens where live in squalor dread,
Huddled together, the tumultuous crowd
Who on the scanty bread
That labour yields impatient fling themselves,
Clamouring with greed aloud;

And from the din of sultry factories where
Monsters of steel, huge engines snort all day,
And where the pungent air
Poisons the blood of the pale weaver-girls
And makes them waste away ;

From the miasmal rice-plantations there,
From barren fields where weary peasants plod,
From walled-in houses, where
So many inert creatures prostrate lives
Spend in the name of God,

There comes to me of weeping manifold
The stifled sound that will not cease to stun
My heart with woe untold,
A bat that flits about me in the dark,
A cloud that hides the sun !

And joy and beauty flee away from me,
Light, scarce awakened by the morning, wanes,
Love's daring dreams all flee,
The blissful ecstacy of kisses sweet —
And naught but pain remains ! —

But it is pain that never will incline
Its head, but, rising, points to God on high —
That power, that strength divine,
That kept Prometheus chained upon his rock
And would not let him die.

*As Long
as I Live
and
Beyond*

And o'er the pallid listening crowd intent
My tragic song soareth in broken flight
As a great eagle, spent,
Wounded to death, descendeth on the ice
Of yonder glacier's height."

IN THE BREACH

TRAGIC, severe, in serried ranks they pass,
Bareheaded, silently.
And from the coffin with sad dignity
Float down the folds of the black pall. — Alas !

A gloomy pain is set on every brow,
They solemnly go by.
In vain smiles over them the cloudless sky ;
Their tears roll down, they do not heed them
now.

His mutilated body lies inside
Those boards, disfigured, marred. —
From the high roof he fell and struck the hard
Stone flagging in the street below, and died.

*In the
Breach*

Strong, handsome as a Titan, e'er he fell,
And full of hope and life,
He had been working there. His stricken wife
Is wrung with grief, no human speech can tell.

To realms of sleep's forgetfulness, alas !
They carry him and sigh. —
Beneath the finger stern of God on high
Tragic, severe, in serried ranks they pass

And think. — Oh fate ! — Like him they also
might,
Perhaps soon, have to go.
A workman is a soldier ; well they know, —
Their breasts are heaving, and their cheeks grow
white.

Herculean and courageous they to-day
Have for their dreams an aim :
A family, a hut, some darling name,
Who knows ? they too at work to-morrow may

Fall from a roof, be crushed beneath a beam,
Meet death in other guise.
None listens to the cry of him who dies,
None understands the sacrifice supreme,

Ever the living take the vacant place :
New hope from mourning grows :
A never-ending army onward goes,
O'er the defeated — on at heedless pace.

As children, gayly clamouring, upon
The silent graves will play,
Unmindful eager masses march away,
On o'er the fallen victims — ever on.

*In the
Breach*

GOOD-MORROW, MISERY

TO SOFIA BISI ALBINI

WHO knocks? — Who is out there? —
— Good-morrow, Misery, advance, come
in.

Thou art cold as death, come in, my dwelling
share.

Secure, defiant, I await thee, thin,
Drear, toothless ghost, thou dost not frighten me,
Behold! — I laugh at thee.

Does that suffice thee? — Pray,
Come in, accursed spectre, come and rest,
Take all my hope away,
Wrench it with thy sharp nails from out my
breast
And with thy gloomy pinions overspread
My dying mother's bed.

Thy wrath is kindled? — Oh,
What matters it? For mine are youth and life!
Thou shalt not see me, no!
Not see me fainting in this fatal strife.
O'er fallen ruins, over grief and tears
Triumph my twenty years.

*Good-
morrow,
Misery*

Thou canst not evermore
Wrest from my heart that glowing force divine,
Upward I ever soar,
Thou canst not stop that buoyant flight of mine.
Thy sting is impotent. — Grim goddess, nay,
I follow my own way.

Down in the world there, see !
What roses and what sunlight far and nigh,
List to the jubilee,
The trills of larks up in the radiant sky :
The air with faith and with ideals rings
And fluttering of wings ! —

Megeara wan and old,
Hiding thyself in a sinister shroud,
Within my veins, behold,
There floweth blood that glows with ardour proud,
Anxiety, tears, anger, I defy
And ever onward fly.

For labour's dignity
That nobly governs all, I long ; my heart
Craves dreams and harmony,
It craves the everlasting youth of art,
The laughing azure deep, the balm of flowers,
Stars, kisses, blissful hours.

Thou passest on, O black
Enchantress, as a shadow o'er the light,
Resplendent hope comes back,

All, all revives, the violets smile bright :
And I from out thy meshes boldly spring
Life's hymn of praise to sing !

*Good-
morrow,
Misery*

THE OLD MAN

IN CHURCH

THOU art alone here. — Pray,
O pale old man. — What sad thought
guided thee ?

What made thee turn this way ?
The God, who sent thee joy and sorrow, here
Within the dark church speaks to thee maybe,
That mighty Lord that filleth thee with fear ?

There pass before thy mind
The memories of years that long have fled
Forever, and behind
Thee lies of thy past life the Calvary ;
The life of serf, of beggar, thou hast led,
So full of darkness, suffering, misery.

Here in the silence pray.
All unawares with passing years depart
The hopes of youth's brief day ;
Its wishes, its illusions, all grow dim,
Yet once there rang within thy trusting heart
A first love's glorious all-inspiring hymn.

*The Old
Man*

Yea, for that enemy dread,
That cruel fate that bent beneath its yoke
Thy proud, thy lofty head,
For thy sad youth, marred by contempt and strife,
Nay, for the very rags of thy poor cloak,
She loved thee, and she followed thee through
life.

Fair-haired and slender she ;
Shining from out her eyes' sweet dignity,
Her pure soul you could see.
She shared with thee the burden of distress,
She shared the world's disdainful charity,
And poverty's disgrace and loneliness.

And then — she went to sleep,
Thy tender kiss closing her lovely eyes.
Ah, tell me, to what deep
Abyss did she retreat, or far above
Did she conceal herself in the blue skies,
That gold-haired fay, thy faithful gipsy love ?

Thou art alone here. — Pray,
Old tottering man. — What sad thought guided
thee ?
What made thee turn this way ?
That mighty Lord that guards thee all the while
Here in the dark church speaks to thee maybe,
Who in misfortune yet gave thee her smile.

All fades, the tempest wanes,
The evening of thy life draws near its verge,
Naught here to thee remains.
O'er thee, a serf, a beggar, harsh and rough
Has been of adverse fate the cruel scourge —
But thou hast been beloved ! — That is enough.

*The Old
Man*

THE SONG OF THE PICKAXE

ARUSTIC sword that cleaves the soil am I,
I am force, and yet I grope
In ignorance ; I thrill with hunger's cry ;
I am misery and hope.

I know the red-hot scourge of noontide's glow,
The thunder's deafening crash,
The hurricane's tremendous clouds I know
From which the lightnings flash.

I know the fertile odours sweet that May
In wild triumphant mirth,
With royal flowers, insects and kisses gay
Calls forth from out the earth.

Ever more sharp, more smooth and bright I grow
With every hour of toil,
As, constant, strong, submissive, on I go
Cleaving the hardened soil.

*The Song
of the
Pickaxe*

Into the lonely farmhouse gray and old,
In dingy huts and low,
Where through the broken casement bitter cold
The winds of winter blow,

Where idleness, by smouldering brand that sighs,
Squats mute ; where, famished, thin,
Disease is shivering, wan, with hollow eyes,
And yellow, withered skin,

I enter in and watch as I remain
In a lone corner's gloom,
While dreadful dark sinks on the swampy plain
And fills the smoky room.

While fever grim the women's bodies shakes,
Working its cruel blight,
Naught but the peasants' heavy breathing breaks
The silence of the night.

I watch and in me springs a hot desire :
Of a new dawn I dream,
When, golden in the sun, shining like fire,
An oriflamme supreme,

Brandished by an inspired rustic crowd
With strong almighty hand,
I shall be raised with strength and life endowed,
Above the fertile land,

But free my blade shall be from bloody stain,
And banners white shall fly,
The dragon dread of hatred shall be slain,
In dust downtrodden lie,

*The Song
of the
Pickaxe*

And from the earth that is with fragrance fraught,
That teems with joyous love,
Cleared from old wars that hostile forces wrought
By ardour from above,

A mighty tumult hoarse of human cries
To the blue sky o'erhead,
Mingled with sobs, yet as a hymn, shall rise :
“ Peace ! — Labour ! — Bread ! ”

THE DEFEATED

YEA, there are hundreds, thousands, millions
more,
Unending hosts there are.
The serried ranks are muttering like the roar
Of thunder from afar.

And they advance, chilled by the icy air,
With even step and slow.
They 're clad in sackcloth and their heads are bare,
Their eyes in fever glow.

*The
Defeated*

All, all united, as if seeking me —
 Gray forms, by suffering bowed,
Of surging waves a turbid, troubled sea,
 Of faces wan a crowd,

Covering, imprisoning me, they press around,
 Their hoarse breath fills my ear,
Their long-drawn sobs and sighs — oh, woful
 sound —
 Their blasphemies I hear.

“ We come from houses where no fire glows,
 From beds where rest is not,
Where, broken, tamed, the body slowly grows
 Accustomed to its lot.

We come from caves and dens, from chambers
 low,
 From many a dark retreat,
Shadows of peril and of pain we throw
 Wherever tread our feet.

And we sought faith that to ideals cleaves,
 Alas ! we were betrayed ;
And we sought love that hopes and that believes,
 Alas ! we were betrayed.

And work we sought that gives new life and *The*
strength, *Defeated*

Only repelled to be.

Where then is hope? Oh mercy! Where is
strength? —

The world's defeated, we !

In the great flood of sunshine's golden light

All round us and above

Bursts forth upon the air in joyous flight

A hymn of work and love :

An iron snake the steam-train thundering winds

Through towering mountain-wall,

And industry is summoning arms and minds

With warlike trumpet-call.

A thousand mouths each other seek, enticed

By love's intent desire ;

A thousand generous lives are sacrificed

In glowing furnace-fire.

And we are useless ! — Who has thrust us, who

On this stepmother earth ?

Who has denied us every wish we knew,

Yea, from our very birth ?

What unknown power with hostile hand does
reign

And will not let us free ?

Why does blind fate cry out to us : In vain ? —

The world's defeated, we ! ”

THE HAND IN THE WHEELWORK

THE belts are whirling, the machines are
screaming,
And those at work, happy, untiring, strong,
Join in a joyous song.

But suddenly a piercing shriek arises,
As a wild animal, when wounded sore,
Utters a frantic roar.

The wheelwork's gnashing teeth are sharp and
cutting, —
Poor mutilated fair-haired woman ! — and,
O God — a severed hand !

The belts are whirling, the machines are screaming ;
Alas ! no longer now the working throng
Their voices raise in song.

Mingled with drops of sweat their tears are falling,
The motor in the distance sighs and wails,
And telleth woful tales.

Before their tear-dimmed eyes still reappearing
The mutilated fair-haired woman, — and,
O God — that severed hand !

LOUD GROANS THE MACHINE

L OUD groans the machine.— Its tempestuous
 roar
Goes up as an eagle to fly,
On pinions of sound, strong and solemn, to soar
To the great golden clouds in the sky.

Loud groans the machine. 'Tis the heart-rend-
 ing cry
Of him who gave up his last breath
'Mid the merciless teeth of the wheelwork to die,
Surrendering his life unto death.

O'er screws and o'er beltings, o'er steel and o'er
 fire,
A ruler with power unbound,
The huge snorting monster with dread doth
 inspire
As it revels in clamouring sound.

It laughs as with madness, it bellows and cries,
Then, slackening, it comes to a stay ;
Again it renews the assault, to the skies
Ascends the prophetic Huzza.

“ Ye champions of labour to come, hear the call,
Come forth to take part in the strife :
With axe, spade, and saw, with the hatchet, come
 all
To the grand competition of life.

Loud The kiss of the sun on your faces serene,
Groans the Your veins swelled with vigour and mirth,
Machine And quaffing the breezes ambrosian and keen,
 And fed by the fruits of the earth,

Bold champions, come forward ! the age draweth
nigh

Of freedom in glorious array " —

Loud groans the machine : with the winds to the
sky

Ascends the prophetic Huzza.

ONE OF THE PEOPLE

THE shuttles fly, the thread is caught ; with
glee

I sing : My eighteen years,

A loom, two handsome eyes that know no tears,

A cotton dress, a love, belong to me.

When I untie my red braid and a lock

Like copper flashes bright,

Through eyes that look at me there shoots a
light

And hearts are thrilled by an electric shock.

Yet I unheeding pass the tempters vile,

Laugh at their flattery cheap,

All, all my kisses for my love I keep,

The world I 'd give him for a single smile.

I love him. — Master of the forge is he,
A king his tools among ;
Handsome, tall, muscular, robust, and strong,
Beside him but a child I seem to be.

*One of the
People*

When I have seen him at the anvil stand,
Lit by the firelight,
Beating a red-hot bar with all his might,
His bare neck swelled, a hammer in his hand,

My pride in him to ecstasy has grown,
All else beside seems small ;
He is my demon, he my god, my all,
I want him for myself, myself alone !

When in my attic-room I wait for him,
And precious minutes flee,
Suspense with cruel clutches throttles me,
A stinging pain runs through my every limb :

Now — on the stairs approaching footsteps fleet —
'The door is opened — and,
Though pale my lips, despite my trembling
hand,
To fly toward him I have wingèd feet.

Though black with smoke, his eyes with ardour
shine,
Tired yet with smiling face
He presses me in passionate embrace,
And his strong heart is beating against mine.

FLOWER OF THE PEOPLE

HAST thou not seen her yet ? — Like copper
red

Her glowing cheeks appear.
A goddess, though but litter is her bed,
A sun-browed goddess, ever full of cheer.

Always she smiles, her small teeth are so white,
Her lips so red, thou art
Tempted to kiss them. — The bewitching light
That sparkles in her eyes strikes to thy heart ;

Explain it ? — Nay, not I. But thrilling through
Thy veins, it seizeth thee.
That she is beautiful she never knew,
And on this earth she loveth none but me !

At evening at yon' corner of the street
She waits for me, alone.
Her eyes flash bright as soon as mine they meet,
And melody rings in her every tone ;

Into my ear she whispers foolish words,
So many flames of fire.
I feel her heart beat like a little bird's,
The breath from out her lips, warm with desire ;

Although a sturdy arm is all I own,
No cause for fear I see,
She will be happy at my side alone,
And nobody can wrest my love from me !

Hear this!—They told her that I was not *Flower of
the People*
true,

Told her the name one day
Of her fair enemy. — Ah, pale she grew,
Panting, dishevelled, mute she turned away ;

She saw her, threatened her, with mad abuse
She bit her ; as a horse
That runs away on having broken loose,
She let her raging fury have its course.

That evening I returned. — She neared me,
slow,

Trembling with hopes and fears,
And with a voice that would win any foe,
Her great imploring eyes swimming in tears,

A humble slave, confused, with flowing hair,
Yet full of magic power,
In her impassioned love surpassing fair,
Entrancing, beauteous as an opening flower,

And, drawing near me with a shy caress,
“Forgive,” she whispered low.
“Do not forsake me, do not love me less ! —
Vengeance I had to take, I love thee so.”

THE PAGAN KISS

AMID the golden corn, beneath the beams
That fill the valley with their glorious bliss
Till every dewdrop gleams,
Upon her fresh, warm mouth burns his first kiss.

The fields below, the cloudless sky above,
Laugh at the happy pair ;
In the pure guileless kiss of youthful love
All things rejoice. Into the balmy air,

A glowing sigh from every opening cup,
Sweet perfume rises, as from mouths that long
For love. From earth goes up,
From blooming earth goes up, a joyous song.

Smiling, amid the green, embrace the two
Young lovers, while on high
Beneath the lofty vault of heaven blue
A swallow's trill is ringing in the sky ;

'Mong shady boughs, 'mong flowers and buds
that burst,
'Mong yellow corn, in hidden nests, with bliss,
All round them thrills that first
Intoxicating, life-begetting kiss.

THE ARABIAN HORSE

DREAMEST thou not of thy far-away land ?
Dreamest thou not of its yellowish sand,
 So sunny and bright ?
Of golden and level, unlimited space ?
Of bold, neighing horses that jubilant race
 In buoyant delight ?

When thou art shaking thy beautiful mane,
When, pawing the ground with impatience in vain,
 Thou art champing thy bit,
When wildly and loud thou art neighing, like fire
Deep down in my bosom a burning desire
 Is suddenly lit :

Knowest thou not that I long for the strand,
Infinite stretches of hot golden sand
 , Without limit or bound ?
Come, on thy lithe, sturdy back let me leap,
Galloping fast as the wind, let us sweep,
 Devouring the ground.

Far from the mist in the meadow below,
Far from humanity, vulgar and low,
 Far, far away flee.
Break through the tangle of thorns in the vale,
On at full gallop through woodland and dale —
 A king thou and free.

*The
Arabian
Horse*

Crushing the flowers where we trample the ground,
Leaving behind the abyss, with a bound
O'er the torrent we fly.

Though long our road, ever onward we must,
If even we both should be thrown in the dust,
My charger and I.

Oh roseate flames of the westerly sky,
Oh visions of palm-trees, majestic and high,
Mirage on the sea !
Low elegies sweet of Arabia, meseems,
O'er the greenish horizon, like far-away dreams,
Are wafted to me.

Sparks fly about as we tear o'er the plain,
Gallop, my Ahmed, for naught can restrain
Our fiery race.
Towards the unknown, gallant charger of mine,
All I defy if but freedom divine
Blow full in my face.

THEE ALONE

HERE — thee, and thee alone. — Oh let me,
Love,
Upon thy throbbing breast find sweet relief,
Let me pour out my sobs, so long suppressed,
Tell all my secret wishes, all my grief —

I long, I long for tears.

My weary aching head, oh let me, Love,
Lean on thy shoulder, find at last repose,
As hides a shy bird 'neath its mother's wing,
As droops upon its stem a fading rose —

*Thee
Alone*

I long, I long for peace.

Upon thy youthful brow, oh let me, Love,
With trembling, yet with fervor, press a kiss,
And whisper in thine ear one single word,
Intoxicated with a moment's bliss :

I long, I long for love.

SINITE PARVULOS

Oh, si vous rencontrez quelque part sous les cieux.

V. HUGO.

WHEN at the crossways in some lonely wild,
Or 'mid the thoughtless gay crowd in the
street,

With pallid face and timid eyes, you meet
A poor, forsaken, solitary child

That mourns a mother's memory, maybe,
Most dear, most sacred, who must sorely miss
Her hand of guidance, her advice, her kiss,
Bring him to me ! He 'll be my son. With me

I 'll ever keep him, and at eventide
I 'll fold his little hands and softly say
'The prayer of my own childhood's brightest day,
With him and for him, kneeling by his side.

*Sinite
Parvulos*

The word I'll teach him that has power to bless,
To comfort, and to elevate ; always
I'll guard him jealously through nights and days
With his dead mother's watchful tenderness.

That life is work, I'll say, that to forgive
Means peace ; a golden treasure, none can take,
Of all that's just and great and good I'll make
Within his soul. I'll teach him how to live ;

The power of thought that God Almighty gave
To me, into his mind I shall transfuse ;
Retired, colourless my life shall lose
Itself in his, flow tranquil to the grave.

While, towards oblivion moving, I shall wear
A cap and spectacles, he shall arise,
His hands at toil, on lofty aims his eyes,
And in his heart God's image he shall bear.

Forward to dawn confiding he shall go,
A vital wheel in the vast clockwork be,
A bird that soars into the sunlight he,
A plant that buddeth in the morning glow :

And I shall die in peace. — Not vainly I
Have loved, not vainly suffered. On my grave
In faithful memory a soldier brave,
A loving son, will breathe a grateful sigh.

NENIA MATERNA

WHEN I, a happy baby, years ago
My head confiding on the pillow laid,
My mother, bending o'er her needle low,
Long evenings near me stayed.

She sat and sang — sweet tones like heavenly balm
Flowed from her lips as of a fairy kind ;
Their faint remembrance still has power to calm
My soul, my troubled mind.

The long slow notes so gently took their flight,
Trembling with intimate sweet happiness,
Into the darkness of the silent night,
As soft as a caress.

And I was dreaming. Angels from above
About my cradle thronged in shining crowds,
Telling the childish soul of infinite love,
They played 'mong golden clouds.

Thou dost no longer sing. Around thee rage
Life's winter storms. Now misery uncouth
Laughs without pity at thy worn old age
And at my shattered youth.

O mother, now thou dost no longer sing.
Joys one by one have fled, yet not a word
'Gainst cruel fate — nay, not a murmuring
From thee I ever heard ;

Nenia
Materna

But in my heart's haughty contempt profound
I 'gainst the arrows of grim fate have hurled
Defiance proud, unlimited, unbound,
 'Gainst misery, 'gainst the world.

Still, when on my austere and pallid brow,
Beloved mother, mute thy glances lie,
As if absorbed in bitter memories, thou
 Dost heave a timid sigh,

Then sweetest recollections of the past,
A harmony of unseen wings, drives me
Into thy tender arms to be pressed fast
 Upon thy bosom. See,

In twilight's deepest hour of quietness
Beneath thy loving glance, thus near thee, fain
I would forget that I 'm a poetess,
 And be a child again,

That I might hear once more, as long ago,
Those slow melodious songs that by my side
Thou, crooning o'er my peaceful cradle low,
 To darkness didst confide.

Pressing a kiss on thy white forehead mild,
That grief and loving care have furrowed deep,
Held in thine arms, once more a tired child,
 I long to go to sleep.

IN THE HURRICANE

WHEN a grand thunderstorm rules all around
And roars and rages on with frantic might,
When Æolus, a fury grim, unbound,
Hisses amid the lightning's livid light,

I in the hurricane's mad whirling race,
Far from the world apart,
Would lose myself, quite lose myself in space,
Held thus close to thy heart,

In the immensity adrift with thee,
Tell thee the constant war that fills my soul,
The war that thou dost not suspect in me
And even God knoweth not. The thunder's roll

Around me, the wild wind's tempestuous roar,
Tumult and darkness dread,
Below me fright, destruction, I would soar,
Upon thy heart my head.

LIGHT

WITH luminous splendor
Pervading the air,
With colours most fair
Reviving the freshness
Of all that is green,
A glow never seen
Fills heaven and earth,

Victorious and warming, triumphant with mirth.

Light

Here pearls iridescent
That dance in the spray,
There butterflies gay
Are wedding the roses,
With kisses of flowers
Sweet pagan life showers,
Around me, above,
The world, and exulting, all clamours with love !

My soul overflowing,
Hope swells to its height,
Of life the delight
I feel in my bosom,
As swift-winged swallows
That revel in space
In jubilant race
Gay dreams fill the air —
Of genius and light I 'm a blithe millionaire !

TAKE ME AWAY

TAKE me away, among the mountains, Love,
Where shines the everlasting ice, and where
The eagle spreads its sounding wings to rove
In mighty circles through the deep blue air ;

Where mire covers not the ground ; where I
The low world's hateful voice no longer hear,
And where I feel less heavily the dry
Hard cross that weighs me down : to that high
sphere

Take me away ! Up there I will be thine
Amid the vigorous eager mountain-air,
'Mong cyclamens, beneath the fragrant pine ;
With smiles of dawn I will caress thee there.

*Take Me
Away*

The plain's gray fog I can no longer bear,
Here in the ricefields poetry dieth ; nay,
There 'mid the Alps' immortal silence, there,
There I will love thee. Oh, take me away !

SO I SEE IT ONCE MORE

SO I see it once more, this humble dwelling,
My mother's dear neat chambers, where one
day .

I lived a child. Oh, how my heart was swelling
With hopes, when, rich in dreams, I went away !
So I see it once more, this humble dwelling.

White bed where once I slept 'neath snowy
cover,
My pretty knickknacks and beloved flowers,
Sweet memories of bygone Aprils hover
Among ye, speak of sunshine and of showers,
White bed where once I slept 'neath snowy
cover.

In my dejected heart new hope arises
As on these memories I ponder, while
Faith in more beautiful, more glorious guises

So I See It Calls to my lips a long-forgotten smile —
Once More In my dejected heart new hope arises.

Mother, here in the silence, near thee kneeling,
Caressed by thee, I feel a child again ;
Let me pour out my heart to thee, revealing
Its overwhelming sadness and its pain,
Mother, here in the silence, near thee kneeling.

Oh, do not leave me, do not ever leave me,
Sole comfort, thou, of my sad twenty years !
So close to thee, O mother dear ! believe me,
My soul forgets its sorrows and its tears.
Oh do not leave me, do not ever leave me !

A breath of peace is from above descending ;
Throbbing with golden stars, the heavens glow ;
The wind is hushed, the flowers in sleep are
bending,
In silence hushed is every human woe ;
A breath of peace is from above descending.

STRANA

A LONG, slow shudder through the foliage
draws :
The wind relates a story to the woods
That whisper and that pause.

“Hush! Once upon a time” —the wind is *Strana*
heard —

And, shivering at the gasping breath, the woods
Listen to every word.

“A wandering maiden to this forest came :
Her mouth was red, her hair was tawny gold,
And *Strana* was her name.

One day she fell in love. Her passion’s might
Was mad intoxication, sweetest bliss,
Hot noonday, blackest night.

And then one day she waited — but in vain.
Silent, with beating heart, she waited long.
He never came again.

And thus she spoke, bowing her weary head :
‘What good is there in dragging on and on
My life, when love is dead?’

Among the leafy boughs a sigh arose.
The limpid water softly spoke to her
Of infinite repose,

Spoke of oblivion! — Like a low lament
Came from above a murmur : ‘All, all goes
When love is gone and spent.’

And, springing to her feet, a flood she poured
Of curses out against the faithless one
Whom she had once adored.

Strana

As though intoxicated, with a leap
She sprang into the water. O'er her closed
The cold, mysterious deep."

Thus tells the wind. The night in silence sinks,
Girded with clouds, upon the listening wood
That shudders while it thinks.

And lo, the wind arises gradually,
Proudly its pinions shaking, twists and turns
And rages furiously.

It moans and long-drawn sighs of anguish heaves,
A tearful voice it seems, of pain supreme —
A tremor thrills the leaves.

And every bough with wild emotion throbs,
Fierce words of wrath come whistling through the
air,
Pantings, heartrending sobs —

Bound to a memory, naked, ghostly pale,
The soul of one departed whirleth past
On through the lonely dale.

Among the leaves there seems to sigh a breath :
"No, there's no peace! — The love that glows
in life
Flames fiercer yet in death."

WHY

I

TWENTY the one, handsome, with love
 aglow,
A gallant youth, full of melodious song,
From his inspired fervid lips there flow
Vibrating words that but to me belong.

Him, who in wingèd verse sublimely grand
Describes the ecstasies of love, I see,
Shy, trembling like a child, before me stand,
Vanquished, subdued, when face to face with me.

Follies he whispers, kneeling at my feet :
“ Ah for thy words of love I would give fame,
With thee alone I long to share my lot — ”

His mystic harmonies of art most sweet,
Dreams, wishes, smiles, high inspiration's flame
Are at my feet, and yet — I love him not !

II

THE other carries his imperious head
High as the oak that wind and rain defies.
He's silent — still the poetry I have read
That in his strong, his gentle being lies.

No word of love he speaks to me — maybe
He does not dare. His fiery eyes confess
That I am beautiful, that he loves me,
With a pathetic, secret, sad caress.

Why

When daylight lingers on the window-panes
And on my pallid face his eyes of fire,
And when he dares not speak, but suffering sighs,

Languid intoxication thrills my veins,
Into his arms drives me a keen desire
As to its feeding-place the woodbird flies.

CHALLENGE

OH thou licentious world of crafty burghers
That but for bill o' fare and money cares,
World of coquettes and gambling pleasure-seekers,
Of well-fed millionaires,

Of girls that go to church to eye their lovers,
Of opium eaters, world of wicked schemes,
World of adultery and of corruption,
Of shattered hopes and dreams,

Ha, is it thou, deceiving world, that wouldest
Shut out from vision my ideals' light,
That wouldest clip my pinions, wretched coward,
To stop my upward flight ?

Thou crawlest and I soar ; while thou art yawning,
I sing : Of ecstasy the magic fire
Burns in my soul. Oh, I despise thee, sinking
Deep, deeper in the mire.

Be cursed, licentious world of geese and serpents, *Challenge*
Cursed, cowardly, vile world, forever ! I
Go forth to meet my fate, my glances resting
Upon the stars on high.

Thirsting for light, unarmed, alone I'm striving.
The more sordid and sceptical thou art,
The more sublime the word of love prophetic
Is bursting from my heart !

Go in pursuit of courtesans and money,
Go to perdition, on, at rapid pace :
Lo, with the lash of my indignant verses
I strike thee in the face.

SALVETE

I THINK of the brave champions of the spade
Who, in defiance of the storm and sun,
Wrest from the parchèd, the tormented glebe
Their wretched bread.

And of the champions of the pick I think,
Of miners in the cursèd dark below,
Sinewy and haggard workers who toil on
And never rest.

A hollow echo rumbles through the mine —
With a tremendous crash the vault caves in,
And all is dust and black abyss, long sighs
And groans and death —

Salvete

But through the mighty mountain's piercèd breast
The glorious victor steam forces his way ;
Emerging from the gloom, triumphant greets
The dazzling sun.

I think of champions, leaders brave of thought
Who stand as martyrs 'mong the unknowing
crowd,
And, feverish care kindling their generous minds,
To battle call.

I think of those who watch and toil and die
Unknown, and from my heart bursts forth,
Re-echoing o'er all the earth, a cry :
Hail, hail, ye strong !

Hail, hail, ye bared, ye iron chests, ye arms
Sturdy and muscular, ye bodies lithe
That never tire amid the deafening din
Of factories :

Ye who with work's sacred ambition glow
And in the midst of toil some day shall die,
Of thought and of the mallet, of the axe,
Brave champions, hail !

Before my eyes in dreadful visions pass
Phantoms of working-women wan and worn,
And vessels pass that with the tempest's shock
Sink in the sea ;

And weary children, pale and furrowed brows, *Salvete*
Disfigured faces, crippled bodies thin,
All, all that infinite exhausted crowd,
 In endless file.

I hear the sound of voices from afar,
And blows of pickaxe, hammer, and of club :
Amid the tumult vast that stirs the earth
 I freely sing :

Thee, thee I sing, great human family,
So widely spread, so diligent, so grand !
Go, fight and hope, and without resting strive,
 For life is brief.

On labour's contests, on the victors' heads,
The agonies of the defeated, slain,
Shines the serene, immortal gaze of God,
 The glorious sun.

HAVE MERCY !

TO thee, O Lord, I pray,
Guard thou me in the dark.
'T is late. Far, far away
A bronze bell tolleth — hark !
The night its wings spreads wide —
Upon my knees I lie
Here by my mother's side —
Oh, do not let her die !
 Have mercy !

*Have
Mercy !*

Cold sweat stands on her face,
Her face so still and gray.
O Lord of night and space,
Who didst climb Calvary,
Who thine own cross didst bear,
A crown of thorns didst wear,
O Jesus, hear my prayer
This precious life to spare !
Have mercy !

Mercy ! Her suffering see !
Mercy on her who's slain !
What wilt thou have of me,
Inexorable Pain ?
Seize me, and cover thou
With woe and shame my head,
Carve on my youthful brow
Of grief the furrows dread.

Oh, make my heart to break !
Love, joy, and all I'll give,
All but my tears, take, take —
But let my mother live !
Have mercy !

THOU who art handsome, generous, and
strong

Wouldst win my love ? — Beware !
If joy and hope unto thy fate belong,
Wish not my gloomy path of life to share.
Of peace and love earth has an ample store :
Go, child ! for I am war.

Thou whose confiding soul glows in thine eyes,
Wouldst win my love ? — Beware !
Kneel not imploringly before me ! Rise !
Wish not my gloomy path of life to share !
If fortune swells thy sails with hopeful breath,
Draw back — for I am death.

Upon my aged mother's hoary head,
On mine that still is brown,
I saw the tempest break, saw cruel, dread
Afflictions, sorrows one by one come down ;
Haggard, exhausted, clad in garments old,
I wept with want and cold.

Thus I grew up in suffering and pain,
Confiding it to none ;
Still 'mid the dark here in my heart did reign
A mad, unbridled craving for the sun.
I lived of secret tears ; hunger and thirst
I suffered and — I cursed.

Go
When I think of my mother whom a slow
Disease is murdering,
Of our hearth, extinguished long ago,
The sumptuous world where shouts of laughter
ring,
A deathly hate, vented in many a curse,
Lends pinions to my verse.

And thou wouldst win my love? Oh, turn and
go,
Go and forget me, child!
The anguish of my soul thou dost not know,
That ne'er has peace, but glows in struggles wild!
Unloved and miserable, let me flee
Where'er fate carries me.

To wastes of stones and thorns let me retreat
Till I this life depart,
Forever pressing on with restless feet,
A fever in my blood, God in my heart.
Of peace and love earth has an ample store:
Go, child! for I am war.

NO

I SPOKE to him: "I do not love thee, no —
I never loved thee. I
Will not be thine, nor dead nor living! Go!"
He answered: "Thou dost lie."

“If e’er I love thee,” I replied again, *No*
“May God undo me ! I
Have wiped thee from my heart. Thy words are
vain.”

He answered : “Thou dost lie.”

“In vain, in vain, unhappy pallid youth,
Thou dost demand my heart.
My soul has sealed my every word in truth.”
He answered : “Mine thou art.”

Moved, not defeated, in his face I read
And spoke : “ ’T is all in vain.
Think of thy fatal love, thy mother dead,
Of me and of my pain ;

Ah, think of God, who all things hears and sees,
Think of thy cursèd past,
Rebel not against fate, spare me thy pleas,
Let me have peace at last.

Naught holds thee back. Forget me ! Go !
Depart !

Give up besieging me !
My memory even pluck from out thy heart ! ”
He spoke : “ I want but thee.”

Persisting uselessly, absorbed in this
Desire, he would not go.
Into his face once and again I hiss :
“ What dost thou wait for ? — No ! ”

APRIL SONG

O LOVE, O love ! — I feel thy power divine
Throb in the sunlight, in the rivulets,
In the great gusts of wind that stir the pine,
In the sweet fragrance, gentle, timid, pure,
Of the first violets.

As warm and vital fluid thou dost hie
Through every shoot ; soaring in rapturous flight
Thou singest with the larks ; o'er earth and sky,
Audacious angel, 'mid a thousand motes
Of gold, thou 'rt sprinkling light.

O love, O love, wherewith all nature rings,
In April's exultation feel I thee ;
Thou givest roses perfume, winds their wings,
Covering the earth with kisses and with beams,
But thou art dead in me.

THE WORKING MOTHER

A MONG the shrieking wheels of the great
mill
Where, 'mid the din that shaketh the wide hall,
A thousand women all
Their vigour spend, she too is working still.

For many a lustre, since she was a child
She has been here. — Deftly her nervous hands
 Guide thread and spool. She stands
And does not heed the noise, the tumult wild

That rages all around. But sometimes now
She is so tired and weary, oh, so tired !
 And yet, as if inspired,
Raising her head, she smoothes her careworn brow.

She seems to say : “ On, ever onward still ! ” —
Oh, misery, if one day her strength should fail,
 If she began to ail,
And could no more return her place to fill !

She must not and she cannot. — For her joy,
Her one ambition, her one son, behind
 Whose brow she has divined
The lofty flight of genius — he, her boy,

Is studying. — She will, at any price,
For his necessities toil on all day,
 Waste drop by drop away,
Offer herself a living sacrifice.

As once her youth, her old age too, God knows,
Trembling and frosty, she will give, her health
 That was her only wealth —
Oh, saintly worker ! — sweetness of repose,

*The
Working
Mother*

All she will give. Her son shall study.— Grand
The future time shall see him, world renowned
And feared, his dark head crowned
With gold and laurel wreaths at fortune's hand !

Son of the people, study, silent sit
In the low hut that in the shadow lies,
Thou in whose ardent eyes
The mystic words of genius high are writ,

In thy proud muscles, in each fibre feel
The buoyant energy, the health that grace
A bold, undaunted race.
Aspire to the heights with fearless zeal.

Thy mother for thy sake some day will die ;
To her intrepid, fallen body throw
A kiss, a greeting, go
To meet the hostile host that draweth nigh,

And with thy voice, thy pen, go forth to fight
And point out to the tottering century
The glorious radiancy
Of vast horizons bathed in a new light.

True, steadfast, honest in the noble strife
Awaiting thee, remember evermore :
Amid the great mill's roar
For this thy mother sacrificed her life.

IT CANNOT BE

WHY is it, when thy lips with magic sweet
Speak of thy wandering life to me, when I
Thy blue eyes' deep, enamoured glances meet,
Why do they seem to suck my heart out? —

Why? —

To kisses and dead dreams cease calling me! —

Hush, no! It cannot be!

When, thoughtful and absorbed, I list to thy
Soft voice, vibrating like a harp's low strain,
What makes across thy face these blushes fly?
What makes a thrill rush through my every
vein?

To kisses and dead dreams cease calling me! —

Hush, no! It cannot be!

Another fate pursues my earthly lot: —
For me that hour of bliss will never shine,
Where in delirious rapture all 's forgot
And where a lover's lips shall speak: Be mine.
A kiss upon my mouth so young and pure
Would be misfortune sure.

Canst thou my love imagine? Oh, it would
Be radiant light, of joy the ecstasy,
The laugh of youth triumphant, noble, good,
A hymn of hope, a song of victory;
Of soul and mind, of ardent thought supreme
'T would be a magic dream.

*It Cannot
Be* Yet I irrevocably turn from thee,
Rigid and chaste, into the night profound,
Ask not the why of this strange mystery
That like a tyrant ever holds me bound.
To kisses and dead dreams cease calling me !
Hush, no ! It cannot be ! —

PHANTOMS

I WATCHED upon the shore the breaking
waves ;
There rose, it seemed to me,
A host of phantoms from their briny graves
From out the treacherous sea.

With streaming hair, in flowing seaweeds clad,
Pallid and hollow-eyed
They were ; no light their glazèd glances had
And in the troubled water 'neath their feet
The blades of knives I spied.

From their discoloured, frothy lips a groan,
More pained than I can tell,
Came, mingled with the ocean's woful moan,
Appealing to my heart, and, deeply moved,
Upon my knees I fell.

Dead forms they were of victims who still had
A dagger in their breast,
Of shipwrecked sailors and of those who, mad,

To waves and fates had thrown their weary *Phantoms*
lives,

Thus hoping to find rest.

“What do men do on earth?” they asked of
me.

And I replied : “They weep.
Hatred hath burst its chains ; triumphant, free,
Hypocrisy doth rule. Oh, happier ye
Down in the rocky deep !”

They said to me : “Into these haunts of peace
’Mong waving weeds descend,
To the retreats of love where sufferings cease.
Annihilation only can give rest.
Come down ; — here is the end.”

As o’er the greenish phantoms faintly gleamed
The sunset on the deep,
To me the ocean in the twilight seemed
A bed for quiet sleep.

NIGHT JOURNEY

WE start : ’t is after midnight. The lazy
mare is slow,
On shaky wheels the wagon is swaying to and
fro !
On, driver, lash, lash on !

*Night
Journey*

For us, sons of adventure, courageous, gay, and
bold,

No dangers hath the darkness, no threats the
thickest wold,

And stones the road hath none.

All, all in sleep is hiding — on, driver, lash, lash on !

From out a cloud the full moon, the old mali-
cious spy,

Upon the quiet valley keeping an evil eye,

Peeps, watching stealthily.

The trees their boughs distorted to the veiled
heavens raise

Like skeletons in prayer their ghastly arms.—

What says

'The vast immensity?

From out a cloud the cold moon is watching
stealthily.

With fixèd eyes I 'm gazing, spellbound, erect, and
pale,

With flowing hair ; I question : “ Abyss, what
is thy tale ? ”

— Hate, broken vows and lies,

Hot prayers and maledictions the dark has swal-
lowed up,

Passion's delirious kisses, love's sweet and poisoned
cup,

Dreams, crimes, and tearful sighs.

Hearken how through the shadows a moan, a
shudder flies.

Will o' the wisps are springing from putrid tombs, *Night Journey*
and call :

“ What is it thou art seeking here by the sunken
wall

Of this our graveyard gray ? ”

I know not ; fate I 'm seeking. Maybe I 'll find
my grave,

Maybe the night is endless ; it matters not. I 'm
brave.

On, driver, lash away ! —

I fear ye not, ye spectres of yonder graveyard gray.

And over space unbounded that in the silence
sleeps,

As an immortal angel, mysterious vigil keeps

Undying human thought,

The silver clouds in heaven, the gloomy earth,
all things,

The grave and the ideal despoiling with its wings
Of dreams and boldness wrought.

As an immortal angel soar over ruins. thought !

A SOUL

TO NICE TURRI

GREAT and unknown he was. A breath
divine

Of genius once had kissed his brow. And he
Grew up in realms of dream

A Soul

And thought ; handsome and good,
Of noble birth, a poet grand and free,
He lived, but not by many understood.

In superhuman fervid speech, of things
The mystic harmony, the stars above,
The light spoke unto him. —
He who had never sighed
For glory's laurel wreath implored for love
Another soul. — In vain. — It was denied.

Great and unknown, he died ! — In solitude,
In darkness drear, he died. — The light of day
Laughs o'er his longed-for grave ;
Far off a song is heard,
'Mid nature's green resplendent majesty
Dying away, as of a fleeing bird ;

And the defeated matter down below,
Decaying in the coffin, turns again
Unto the fertile earth. —
What — poet, answer me ! —
Of thy sad, stirring poetry doth remain ?
What of thy lofty genius, what of thee ?

Thou who didst drink the sun's celestial flood,
Thou only who didst love, thou art not gone,
Thou who with fire divine
Of genius wert alive,
Bleeding, yet never vanquished, thou alone,
O unknown virile soul, thou dost survive !

When all is hushed, when in the silence floats
A breath of love untold through space on high,
When on the slumbering flower
A kiss from heaven doth sink,
Yea — in that kiss, in that angelic sigh,
Thou art still living, thou dost see and think.

When threatening clouds amass, when, furiously
Striving, the unchained winds the branches bow,
When flaming flashes bright
Light up the vaulted sky,
Yea — in the tempest, wrapt in memories, thou,
Suffering and moaning low, art soaring by.

When, vanishing into the limpid air,
A woman's song doth to the stars arise,
And, telling of caress,
Desire and passion strong,
In the inspired rhythm throbs and sighs,
Vibrating soul, thou tremblest in that song.

As long as o'er the stream the willows wave,
As long as roses blow, as long as yearn
For kisses longing lips,
And thirsty flowers for dew,
As long as love, the Phœbian spark, doth burn,
Enlivening all creation ever new :

In lilies' sweet communing, in the rays
Of tremulous white stars, deep in the sea,
In dazzling noonday-glow,

A Soul In the vast mystery
Of cosmos, borne on breezes free,
Thou, poet soul, shalt live eternally.

DROUGHT

THE sun burns. Golden atoms
Are shining in the air.
Immobile and deserted,
The plain is hidden quite
In dust and dazzling light
And glare.

The drought inexorable
Weighs on it all like lead.
The weary earth in sadness,
As a great whited tomb,
Lies, waiting for its doom,
As dead.

Hush — as a dreaming maiden
Who for love's waking sighs,
A wilted rose in silence,
Scorched by the cruel glow,
Its chalice boweth low
And dies.

This agony invoketh
Dew for the soil and rain ;
For him who toils and suffers

Alone, one hour of bliss,
The sweetness of one kiss —
In vain.

Oblivion all and quiet ;
Burned is the parchèd sod,
And o'er the earth, unswerving,
In grave solemnity,
In anger terribly
Rules God.

THOU WoulDEST KNOW

THOU wouldest know, child, who I am ?
Well, hear :

I am a bird, caught in a cursèd cage ;
With mighty wings within this prison drear,
I crave the starry heavens, flashing clear ;
Enchained, I suffer and I madly rage.
Stay, fair-haired child, and hear.

Gay fancies of wild flowers fill my dreams,
Deep in the shady woods, where towering stand
Gigantic aged trees by murmuring streams ;
The lions' hot delirious love, where gleams
The tropic sand ; the whirling tempest and
Loud thunder, dazzling beams.

At times, when striving passionately to be
Loosed from these hateful bonds, I curse and cry ;
The vain world laughs and listens not to me,

*Thou
Wouldest
Know*

And I, in furious struggle to be free,
Break 'gainst the bars my wings ; the world goes
by
And listens not to me.

Oh, who will burst of this captivity
The iron chains ? Who'll give me space and
light,
Unlock the door, and let me joyously
— Delirious with the sunlight's ecstasy,
Intoxicated — soar in unbound flight ? —
Or Death — or Liberty !

COME TO THE FIELDS

COME to the fields with me, to verdant
bowers,
Where dewdrops on my silken sandals shine ;
This radiant morning all the sweet wild flowers
I will go out to seek —
Come to the woods with me, but, poet mine,
Of love thou must not speak !

A swallow blithe the rosy heaven cleaves,
In grass and moss insects are flashing bright,
Sparkling as diamonds the dewy leaves ;
New life revives the plain ;
Behold, what magic, what a feast, what light ! —
God liveth not in vain !

— Speak not of love to me ! — Of all this glow
Our soul is but a pale mirage. Behold
The flaming flood that makes all things to grow
And to new life gives birth !
Doth not the sun exultingly enfold
With potent love the earth ?

Thou canst not give me this immortal kiss.
— Made up of weakness and of jealousy,
Dark clouds and winter-roses, what is this
Thy feverish, timid love
Compared to nature's glorious harmony
Around me and above ?

I want, I want the fields' unbounded space,
Where throbbing germs spring up and flowers blow ;
I want, I want as a young colt to race
Through meadows, lithe and free ;
I want the rainbow's colours all aglow,
The fathoms of the sea !

The grasses trample down, the boughs despoil,
Delight in liberty, taste all its charms,
And plant my foot upon the virgin soil
Of towering mountains steep ;
As a Sultana, held by kingly arms,
Go in the sun to sleep.

DEEP IN THE DUSKY WOODS

DEEP in the dusky woods
Rages a demon wild.
Laughing he dashes on,
Bendeth the oaks and breaks
Flowers and all ;
Threateningly clouds on high
Rise at his call.

Deep in the dusky woods
Mocking a demon laughs.

Lo, the whole forest dense
Stirreth with life anew,
Writhing convulsively ;
Lo, the whole universe
Trembles and sighs,
Panting with magic speech,
“ Fate — fate ! ” it cries.
Writhing convulsively,
Lo, the whole forest sways.

Listen, the tempest tells
Wonderful stories of
Revels adulterous,
Tells of God's punishment,
Tears' bitter maze,
Crimes and mysterious deeds,
Done in old days.

Listen, the tempest tells
Stories of love and tears.

Take me and carry me,
Spirit malevolent,
On thine unbridled wings
Strong and unfearingly,
Through clouds and lightnings and
Darkness on high,
Carry me far away,
Light as a delicate
Roseleaf to fly —
High, ever higher still into the sky !

*Deep in
the Dusky
Woods*

THE CASCADE

TELL me, from what lofty sources dost thou
spring,
O impetuous cascade ? —
Leaping boldly down the dangerous mountain glade,
Rushing onward to the seas,
Foaming, shining, laughing, dashing, none can
stay thee
In thy course of centuries.

Tell me, from what lofty sources dost thou spring,
Overflowing, brilliant thought ? —
E'er with parchèd lips, exhausted, overwrought,
Drinks at thee humanity.
Thou a mirror to the sun, and none can stay thee
Throughout vast eternity.

MISTICA

SHE loved the solitude of Gothic naves,
Their sweet, mysterious haze,
The altar candles' dimly flickering rays,
Her rosary, its round of mystic ways.

Her prayers turned on future suffering,
Of unknown woe she dreamed ;
She knew it not, but lily-like she seemed,
Of ether, not of flesh and blood she seemed.

One evening, 'neath the shadow of an arch,
A gaze toward her turned ;
She deeply bowed her head and never turned,
But in her veins a thrill like fire burned.

Another evening in the empty church
She met that fervid face.
It promised paradise and hell's disgrace ;
Vanquished, her heart beat fast in the embrace.

"I love thee," breathed a voice upon her lips,
Her tears rose as a tide —
In heaven on high an angel sorrowing sighed ;
A light upon the altar fell and died.

HAST THOU BEEN WORKING ?

SO thou dost love me. This thou hast confessed ; and now
Trembling and silent thou dost wait. I see
Thy cheek turn pale in truth.

Thou wouldest have a kiss, a smile from me,
Thou wouldest have the flower of my fresh youth !
*Hast Thou
Been
Working ?*

But tell me : dost thou know what suffering
means ? Dost know

What an ideal's never ebbing flood,

Its anguish and its strife ?

What profits thee thy strength, thy buoyant blood,

Thy mind, thy soul, thy breath — thy very life ?

Hast thou been working ? Knowest thou long,
sleepless nights,

Watched through in manly thought, upon some
great,

Some earnest work intent ?

And to what banner didst thou consecrate

Thy blooming youth ? Speak, was it nobly spent ?

Thou dost not answer me — away then, go,
return

To idle hours, wasted in glittering halls

Of luxury ! Depart !

Back to thy courtesans, to cards and balls.

I do not sell my kisses and my heart.

Oh, if thou wert exhausted, weary, and in rags,

But with the pride of work thy face inspired,

Lit by a spark of light,

And were thine arms with honest labour tired,

Yet in thine eyes a flash were glowing bright,

Hast Thou And if thou wert plebeian, if above the crowd,
Been Poor cowards, worn, unnerved by pleasures vain,
Working ? Thy lofty brow didst raise,
If in thy vigorous, untiring brain
There nobly burned of thought the fever-blaze :

Then I would love thee, yes ! — I'd love thee
for thy life
Of strenuous work, for having done thy best.
And, gentle as a dove,
I fain would lean my head upon thy breast,
With reverence strong, pale with admiring love !

But who art thou ? — What dost thou hope of
me ? Step back,
Slave, languishing 'mid gilded foulness low,
Thou never canst assuage
My great contempt — go — I despise thee —
go ! —
Thou libertine ! weak son of a weak age.

TO MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

AS to the canvas large mine eyes I raise,
Thine own attract me as a deep abyss,
With magic, fixèd gaze.

Crowned by a wavy mass of golden hair,
Thy rosy nostrils quivering nervously,
Thou art so white and fair.

*To Marie
Bashkirt-
seff*

The firm lips say : " My thought, my will, my
own ; "

The brow that ne'er was bowed, says : " I was
born
For laurel wreath and throne. "

That thou art dead, blond Slav, say, is it true.
Who from Poltawa's ice didst bring to us
A wealth of genius new,

Who from the silence of the snow didst burst
As a pale rose, who didst for glory crave
With a consuming thirst ?

Thine is the war of genius with the powers
Unknown, and thine the fancy that corrodes
All and itself devours ;

Thine is the melody that ever rings
With curses and with sobs, that writhing speaks
In the pulsating strings ;

Thine is the canvas where each colour-spot
Becomes or joy or pain, flesh, sun or soul,
Never to be forgot.

*To Marie
Bashkirt-
seff*

What triumph great of life, what daring scope,
What greatness, what a future lay in thee !
And what a breath of hope !

O flower that from the snowy steppe didst rise,
Thy fresh stalk, straight and verdant, did implore
The desert's endless skies.

O delicate patrician, thou didst sigh
For freedom of the woods, for foaming seas,
For Alpine pine-trees high.

Now what remains of thee, O valiant, brave
Daughter of Art? — An iron coffin dread,
Hid in a gloomy grave :

A cross, exposed to all the winds ; beneath,
Within the coffin, 'mong the worms, thy skull,
That grins and shows its teeth.

No more ? — Infinite calm oppresses me.
'T is night. — Upon the canvas rest mine eyes,
Blond Slav, intent on thee.

Thy changing glances hold me bound ; a part
Of thee, a something enters into me
And poisons all my heart.

A keen, electric current through me thrills,
That, emanating from thy royal form,
My soul, my body fills.

I am possessed by thee. The breath of fire
That undermined thy life, for the unknown
The hammering desire

*To Marie
Bashkirt-
seff*

I feel, the power that creating wrought,
Innate in thee, pulsating in my brain,
The whirling maze of thought.

Far off I see a circling ghost: 't is death ;
Gazing at me, it draweth near ; I 'm seized,
I feel its icy breath ;

All is dissolved to naught. The raven croaks,
Feasting on what was I : inverted, spent,
The torch extinguished smokes.

So naught remains of us, not e'en a spark ? —
The cry of anguish of a wind-swept soul
I hurl into the dark ;

The earth knows not, God will not answer me —
The sigh is lost in space, as when ye thrust
A stone into the sea.

But while thy skull in the black earth beneath
Grins at the doubts of the unknowing crowd,
Showing its sharp white teeth,

All through my being that live spark of thine,
Thy spirit, all through me who soon shall die,
Doth flicker, glow, and shine.

ON HIGH

I DREAM. — And lo, before my wandering
eyes
There passes by a great fantastic throng ;
All wrapt in ruddy light, they move along
Against the June day's lingering sunset skies :

Wan, haggard faces, under crowns of thorn ;
Heads, bowed 'neath dust and ashes ; eyes that
shine
As stars from heaven with light of love divine ;
And bodies thin, by inward ills outworn.

And I demanded : “ Tell me, who are ye
Who, beckoning to me, smiling, past me go,
Silent and beaming in the glorious glow
Of yonder setting sun ? ” — “ The heroes we.

We are the tragic, the inspired host
That on the battlefields, the barricades,
'Mid ringing, fervent hymns and clashing blades,
Offering our breasts to death, gave up the ghost.

Lo, the ill-fated heroes we of thought,
Th' exhausted phalanx we who, still unbent,
Our lives in strenuous endeavours spent,
In futile search of truth, unflinching fought.

Soldiers and martyrs we with iron will :
Strife, sacrifice, and shame were our reward,
Our brows rent open by the hostile sword,
And yet we sobbed in falling : Forward still !

By an infuriated mob to be
Insulted, stoned, and mocked on every side,
We lived but to be tortured, crucified ;
We had no rest, no home ! — The heroes we.”

I rose and cried : Oh, why so many sighs ?
Why so much pain, so many a broken life ?
Why so much suffering and so much strife ?
Why an unending round of ceaseless cries ?

Why ardent after an ideal rove
That as a flash appeareth but to flee ?
Why should the soul in tears and weeping be
Consumed with vain desire, delusion, love ? —

Oh, why ? — And still before my dreaming eyes
There passes by that great fantastic throng,
All wrapt in ruddy light, moving along
Against the June day's lingering sunset skies ;

A calm that is not of this earth doth lie
Upon their radiant faces, and they raise
Their great dilated eyes in rapturous 'maze,
And, smiling, upward point to heaven on high.

ALONE

'MID melancholy ashen veils of mist
The lone autumnal vesper-hour fades
From livid skies on verdant solitudes
Descend the deepening shades.

The leaves are falling, borne in golden whirls
Upon the wind's cold pinions as dead dreams.
A shudder passes through the dusky air,
A bygone kiss it seems.

Upon her soft tossed hair there languishes
A pale last violet, wilted and gone.
She gazes down on the bare sycamores,
A statue, mute — alone.

She gazes down ; of snowy cradles thinks,
Where placidly the smiling babies sleep,
And, their fair heads pressed on the linen white,
Are wrapt in slumber deep.

The mothers watch, and in the tender dark,
Like lovely voices of the heavenly band
To make the angels' sleep more sweet, they sing
Long songs serene and bland.

Deep in the quiet woods the little bird
Draws closer to its mate in the warm nest,
And thus it goes to sleep — no breath's astir,
The wind has gone to rest.

The last pale blossom bows its rosy cup,
Shivering beneath the mist that lies above
The barren land, upon the grass a kiss
Lays — and that kiss is love.

Oh, bliss ! — she dreams. Absorbed in happy
thought,
Beside a white, beloved little bed,
By lamplight o'er her busy needle bent
Her beautiful dark head ;

Whilst he with his strong arms tries to enfold
Her slender form, so supple, chaste, and fair,
She whispers to him with a shy caress :
“ The baby sleeps — beware ! ”

Oh, vain cry of the heart, illusions dear,
Bright visions of gay smiles, of love's young
bloom,
Ye die away beneath the sycamores
In twilight's misty gloom.

A leaf, dropped off the bough, a secret tear,
From out her heart her last fond hope is gone ;
O nests, O flowers, O kisses, snowy beds,
Ye fade. — She is alone.

And with the ravens' distant doleful cry
Into her soul sinks, on the woods below,
The nebulous, autumnal vesper-hour,
Inexorable, slow ;

Alone

It sinks. — Like a Greek statue proud she stands,
Up to the leaden sky her glances soar ;
A shudder sighs in the November wind
And whispers : “Nevermore !”

SPES

WHEN cruel suffering mercilessly brings
To us its wild dismay,
The soul unfoldeth its resplendent wings
And flies away.

A wounded eagle proud, to ice and snow
On lofty heights to soar,
Where, bathed in light, the summit does not know
The tempest's roar.

While the rebellious soul on mountains steep
Rails cursing, high above,
A gentle voice is pleading from the deep :
“ Love — love — oh, love ! ”

THE WIDOW

OH, sorrowing widow, thou, without complaint,
Dost in the smoky hovel damp and low
Sit by thy son who lies there ill and faint,
And without respite thou dost sew and sew.

On thy pale countenance, tired and worn,
A world of suffering has left its trace ;
Thy cross in honest patience thou hast borne :
Would I might press a kiss upon thy face !

*The
Widow*

There glows a bright geranium, scarlet, fair,
Before thy window on the narrow sill.
Fate weighs thee down, yet thou dost not despair ;
Much hast thou wept, yet thou art hoping still.

Oh, let me kneel here, let me learn from thee
To be resigned, forgiving, as thou art,
Who knowest not what hate and envy be !
Oh, bless thou me, most true and noble heart !

Never more touching and more sweet than here
Came back to me my mother's memory.
Never more grand did to my soul appear
Pain's patient dignity.

THE FADED ROSE

SHE loved too much, maybe ;
Weary, she's resting now.
Maybe she suffered much ;
Now, with a tremor, she,
Drooping upon her stem,
Her aching head doth bow.

*The Faded
Rose* Maybe she suffers still :
Life's loathing made her fade,
Or death's delirious pang
With agony doth fill
Her pallid, withered cup —
Maybe she was betrayed.

I know not what strange tales
Relate the falling shades,
The penetrating balm
Which the dead rose exhales,
The solitary room
Which deepening dusk invades.

The soul of one unknown
Is fluttering around :
I hear it as a kiss
That into space has flown,
A mystery of light
And shade, that holds me bound.

And with a new desire
My soul, my being sways :
To feel a burning kiss,
To pass through torment's fire,
The maze of triumph wild,
Of thrilling pain the maze.

Hark ! — evening bells ring clear
From yonder church above.
O flower sad, despoiled,

Consumed by passion, hear :
I do not wish to die
Ere I have tasted love.

*The Faded
Rose*

DEFORMED

HEAR me, kind Sir. — Down in the harbour,
wild,
With roaring voice raves the tumultuous sea.
Did you not look at me ?
A demon's horrid laugh engendered me,
A fury's monstrous child.

The sea's immortal dreariness untold
Doth mingle with my pain, one constant sigh.
Oh, pity me, for I
Am friendless and alone, I have no mate,
No sons ; my hearth is cold.

One day I also, understand me, Sir,
I also sought a flashing star that might
Light up my gloomy night.
I found a splendid vagrant gipsy and
Received and worshipped her.

She lied, I knew it ; still I loved her — nay,
When on her statuesque white marble breast,
Trying to find a rest,
I laid my hideous face, my heart would thrill
And, vanquished, melt away ! —

Deformed She cared not, and I was with jealousy
Ferocious, uncontrollable, consumed,
Of her red mouth that bloomed
Like roses, of her hair, her bosom veiled,
Her laughing gaiety !

She left me, Sir, to seek life's glowing charms,
Dawn, May and beauty ! — I did not pursue
The faithless one. I do
After her vanished shape — I, vile, deformed,
Despised — still stretch my arms.

Oh that I might tear down with daring hand
The portals of my cursèd life and drear !
But death fills me with fear ;
My cowardly, weak soul shrinks back before
The void, the unknown land.

How by the foaming waves' uproarious swell
The shore is shaken and the air is stirred ! —
No living soul is heard ;
This night resembles quite my gloomy fate.
And now, Sir, fare ye well.

VOICE OF THE DARKNESS

TO RAFFAELLO BARBIERA

CHILL, icy solitude. — The darkness drear
Has caught me in its snare.
Black clouds arise, I tarry without fear

As if elate with frenzy. — Oh, cold air,
Cold air of even, fraught with agony,
I pray thee, speak to me !

*Voice
of the
Darkness*

And hark ! it speaks. With forest voices speaks
In tones of mystery
That sound like wrestling spirits' piercing shrieks,
That make the woodlands sway. It says to me :
“ What art thou doing in this lonely glade,
Wild, vagrant gipsy-maid ?

Dost seek oblivion here ? Or wouldest thou
By cruel winds be lashed ?
And is there naught to daunt thy fearless brow,
That thou dost brave the dark, thus unabashed ?
What race is thine that dusky veils of night
Haunt not thy soul with fright ?

Born 'neath the glorious flames of breaking morn,
Beneath the eagle's flight,
Upon the Orient's golden deserts born,
Beneath the Eastern sunshine's scorching light,
'Mid cynic blasphemies, religions weak —
Dost an ideal seek ?

But lo, thy pulses binds an iron chain,
Cold mist surroundeth thee,
Thy life is poisoned, undermined by vain
Desire, consuming thee. And oh, I see
Fate, hounding thee to an untimely grave,
A rebel thou and slave.

*Voice
of the
Darkness*

Brave daughter thou of pain and misery, still
Thou shalt undauntedly
Fight the good fight. Thy verse, unbridled, will
Be thunderbolt and cry of agony.
'Mid thorns of poignant suffering thou shalt rove,
Singing the praise of love.

Thou shalt wade through the mire, but towards
the light
Raise up thy ravished gaze,
Seeking of thought the splendid visions bright
Upon their infinite mysterious ways :
Thou shalt go forth, with virile power replete,
E'en greater in defeat."

Thus speaks to me the dark — and thoughtfully
My soul is listening. Lo,
The shady woods are full of mystery,
Of tearful voices, of the lightnings' glow :
But of a God serene, more strong than death,
Lives in my heart a breath.

THE MARK ON THY BROW

A YOUNG strange woman came, all clad in
red,
And, laughing, with her finger touched my
brow.

A shudder through me sped.

She spoke : “ Thou bearest on thy brow a mark, *The Mark*
Deeply carved in, shaped like a curious cross, *on thy*
Upon thy brow that mark. *Brow*

Thou ne’er shalt be without it through the
flight
Of changing years as fortune’s wheel rolls on,
For ’t is a vampire’s bite.

He of thy life is sucking the best part
With wild avidity, thy fiery blood.
That vampire dread is Art.

How many a, many a night has he not hied
Unto thy pillow’s wakeful solitude,
Famished and eager-eyed !

Hadst thou been born in god Apollo’s time !
But in this mercenary century
Great genius is a crime.

Go, bare thy bleeding heart and let them see
Its open wounds in overwhelming verse ;
They will but laugh at thee.

And, rich in golden youth, healthy and gay,
Sing out a hymn of love ; fantastic thou
And crazy, they will say.

As wolves their prey, critics and sophists will
Pursue thee, tear thee up with insult vain,
Fight o’er the pieces still ;

*The Mark
on thy
Brow* But vainly thou shalt wish to wipe away
That mark; the spark of thought is never
quenched,
No, not for ever and aye."

'T is thus she spoke. Haughty, in vesture red,
Erect before me, Fate she seemed to be.
— And I inclined my head.

PROPHECY

THE evening gathers all its shadows deep
Around the baby like a heavy shroud.
The painèd little mouth takes on in sleep
A trait of sadness proud.

One day, most sweet and dear, full of repose,
A mother's voice rang o'er this cradle white,
Slowly her fervent song of love arose
Into the dusk of night ;

Of smiles and hopes it sang a wondrous lay
In tender tones as of a silver flute ;
Through the dim, quiet rooms it winged its
way, —
But now that voice is mute.

— Poor, motherless, forsaken child, ah me !
Sleep on and rest on thy deserted bed.
At snowy dawn to-morrow thou shalt be
Awaked by hunger dread.

Most beautiful with those sad eyes ablaze,
Those serious lips, that gloomy brow of thine,
Thy stern and yet unconscious, dreamy gaze,
 Misfortune's certain sign ;

Predestined, thou, for suffering and sighs,
Unknown to men, noted by God alone,
Thou shalt live on, raising thy pensive eyes
 Unto the vast unknown :

Alone, exhausted, tired, thou shalt pass by
The crowd that fills thee with untold disdain,
Asking of that unknown the dreadful why
 Of hunger and of pain.

But as a virgin palm from desert sand,
As a fair flower from thorny boughs will rise,
Sending intoxicating perfumes bland
 Into the open skies,

So thou, condemned by fate, severely taught
By those stern masters pain and misery,
Shalt let thy spirit soar on wings of thought
 Into infinity.

A poet thou shalt be ! As in the night,
The silent night, a mighty fire doth shine,
Shall rise from out thy mind the splendid light,
 The flame of thought divine ;

Prophecy For if the smile of beauty flee from thee,
All things at last to earth must pay their fines,
Genius alone in mournful majesty
 Through storm and darkness shines.

A poet thou shalt be — with magic strain
Upon thy virile golden harp supreme
The tearful nights thou shalt evoke again,
 Thy childhood's far-off dream,

And the rebellious pangs, the powerless
Days of thy youth, the wretchedness, the strife,
The longing for thy mother's voice, the stress
 That slowly wears thy life ;

And that proud sobbing, and that woful moan
As, breaking on the shore, the wailing waves,
A nation's sighs of anguish, yea — the groan
 Of myriad weeping slaves.

Thee poet of distress and misery,
Of war with fate, fought in the dark, defeat
And martyrdom and uncrowned victory,
 The earth will loudly greet !

A world of silent suffering shall pass by,
Of ragged weary men unending throngs,
Of a supreme revolt the daring cry
 Shall all ring in thy songs :

For thee who, fighting bravely, dost not swerve *Prophecy*
But scal'st the heights out of life's black abyss,
Glory, enamoured of thee, will reserve
 Her warm, immortal kiss.

MAKE ROOM

MAKE room! — From busy ploughshares,
 from the infernal glow
Of horrible black forges, from tortuous mines
 below,
 From furnaces ablaze,
From mills that with the noises of wheels and
 hammers ring
I rise, a free plebeian — I rise and joyous sing
 To work a hymn of praise.

Make room! — From azure waters where happy
 halcyons soar,
From whispering myrtle-thickets upon the wooded
 shore,
 Where streams o'er pebbles run,
From nests and hiding-places in furrows and in
 bowers
I rise, a daring peasant, and sing, adorned with
 flowers,
 A pæan to the sun.

*Make
Room*

Who stays the foaming torrent that rushes madly
by ?

And who can stay the skylark, lost in the rosy sky,
The arrow, when once fled ?

A gloomy owl, a skylark, a fleeting swallow I ;
I am the rushing river, I as an arrow fly
That into space has sped !

Art, 't is for thee I 'm fighting : — future, I wait
for thee.

My feelings and affections, the fire that glows in
me

And heart and mind devours,
Clad in their jewelled vesture of verses, flowing
free,

To earth and heaven I fling them, a shining sheaf
to be

Of lightnings and of flowers !

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